

**The U.S. - Turkish Partnership**  
**By**  
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Thank you very much, Bonnie [Kaslan], for that kind introduction. It is an honor and a pleasure to be here on the occasion of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations' [ATAA] 25th Annual Convention. I want first to pay tribute to the ATAA. Organizations like the ATAA bring our two worlds together, promote U.S.-Turkey ties, and enhance understanding. This is such an important event because it celebrates two great countries, and two great friends: Turkey and the United States.

Turkey was a different country when I took up my first assignment there in 1989. Turkey's GDP was \$104 billion, economic growth was flat, and per capita income, only about \$1,900, was declining in real terms. There was 65% inflation. Total trade with the United States was only \$3.1 billion.

There were few non-governmental organizations, no reasonable prospects for membership in the European Economic Community, and many in Turkey feared that their nation would become "irrelevant" following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

And today? Turkey's GDP is approximately \$300 billion and the economy has grown 16-17% over the past two years. Per capita income is approximately \$4,000, and inflation less than 10%. Total U.S.-Turkey trade in the first ten months of 2004 was \$7.6 billion.

NGOs and other Turkish civil society institutions have grown in importance,

Turkey has taken great strides forward, and Turkey is a leading member of an expanded

NATO, which is meeting 21st century threats to our security.

We highlight today U.S.-Turkish relations. I report to you that U.S.-Turkish relations remain strong because we share many areas of common interest and concern, and because we work together as both allies and friends, in the Global War on Terrorism, in reconstructing Afghanistan and Iraq, and in so many other ways.

And, together, our two countries must continue to live up to our principles -- and our commitments: to our bilateral interests; to NATO; to freedom and democracy; and to economic prosperity.

First, our commitment to each other: Turkey is important to the United States. We must remain strong and reliable allies. We have disagreements at times -- but our relations are mature enough to withstand them. As Secretary Powell said in May 2003 when asked about differences we had had over Iraq: "Turkey is a good friend, a good ally, and . . . notwithstanding [any] disappointment of a couple of months ago . . . we have a good partnership with Turkey and I'm sure it will continue to grow in the years ahead."

Iraq remains high on our common agenda. A stable, unified, peaceful, and democratic Iraq is in all of our interests. Let me offer our condolences for those Turks who have lost their lives in Iraq. Their sacrifice is not in vain. Turkey has an especially important role to play in helping Iraqis create the kind of country they so clearly want by: assisting the

Iraqi Interim Government; supporting upcoming elections; and aiding economic development.

The United States is committed to the territorial integrity of Iraq and equality for all of Iraq's peoples. And the United States is committed to working with the Iraqi Interim Government and Turkey to rid Iraq of all terrorist groups, including the PKK.

I am worried about the anti-Americanism we see in some Turkish media and politics over Iraq. We know what is going on in Iraq is controversial in Turkey. But we need to approach this debate based on facts and conduct it as allies.

Second, Turkey and the United States remain committed to NATO. Turkey is a leader in a new, expanded, and adapted NATO, and has had a crucial role in the Alliance's involvement in Afghanistan and in the War on Terrorism. In February, Turkey will assume leadership of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan for the second time.

And last June, Istanbul played host to NATO's heads of state and government, providing a most fitting backdrop for a Summit that further expanded the Alliance and sought to extend the Alliance's vision of peace and stability through the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

A third bedrock principle is our continuing commitment to Freedom and Democracy. There is a crucial connection between freedom, democracy, and economic development and prosperity. We appreciate Turkey's role in the G-8's Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, and its leadership role in its Democracy Assistance Dialogue. I know that Turkey will enjoy even greater freedom and democracy because that is what Turks want. The ability to exercise freedom symbolizes genuine tolerance in a civil society. This includes religious freedom.

That is why I believe Turkey should reopen the Halki Seminary in Istanbul and increase protection of non-Muslim religions' property rights.

Fourth, there is our joint commitment to economic prosperity. Turkey's economic reforms over the past three years have moved the economy from crisis to recovery -- and Turkey now has one of the world's fastest growing economies. Turkey has tremendous economic potential: hardworking, skilled people; a strong entrepreneurial spirit; and a strategic location.

The keys to further success will be: maintaining fiscal and monetary discipline; empowerment of the private sector and strengthening independent regulators; and creation of a better investment environment, including solving important investment disputes.

We can see all of this coming together with the European Union's December 17 decision on accession negotiations. Though the EU's decision next week is a European matter, our European friends know that we think that giving Turkey a date will lead not only to a stronger and more prosperous Turkey but is also in Europe's strategic interest.

Turkey has made great strides to meet the EU's Copenhagen political criteria:

- \* A reduced military role in politics;
- \* Constitutional and legal changes expanding individual rights;
- \* Greater minority and cultural rights, including broadcasts in Kurdish;
- \* "Zero tolerance" toward torture and, while there is room for progress, the government is prosecuting violations.

While there is more to do, as Secretary Powell said on Wednesday in Brussels: "When I look . . . at how far Turkey has moved to address and how it is trying to deal with the fundamental concerns that have been

expressed by some in Europe as to whether or not Turkey is ready for beginning the process of admission, it seems to me that Turkey has done a very good job. I would respond most positively if on December 17 the European Union came to that same conclusion."

Starting with the "earthquake diplomacy" of 1999, the last few years have witnessed a transformation in Turkish-Greek relations. One need only look back to the difficult mid-1990s, with dialogue that was more an exchange of warnings and threats and the regular need for U.S. intervention. Now, both governments regularly consult with each another.

Prime Minister Erdogan told President Bush that he wishes to see further improvement in Greek-Turkish relations and Prime Minister Karamanlis has told President Bush that he also shares this goal. We will do our part to encourage an even more positive, beneficial 21st Century relationship.

Another key matter is Cyprus. We regret that an historic opportunity for a viable, lasting peace was missed in the April 24 referendum. We remain committed to seeing agreement reached. Given the vote by Turkish Cypriots in favor of peace and a future in Europe, we are taking some steps to reduce their isolation, including easing travel and trade restrictions, and increase economic development.

Turkey at the end of 2004 should feel confident because it is more prosperous, and more democratic -- with a bright future and a key place beside the United States and as part of Europe.

The self-confident Turkey of 2004 is much better equipped than it was in 1989 to resolve outstanding issues such as those involving Greece, Cyprus, human rights, and religious freedom. I see the European Union's December 17 decision as a confirmation of all the good Turkey has accomplished and the

wonderful progress it has made, and as a launching pad for its future success and prosperity.

I'd like to end with a quote from President Bush's June 2004 visit to Turkey:

"[Turkey] has always been important for its geography -- here at the meeting place of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Now Turkey has assumed even greater historical importance, because of your character as a nation. Turkey is a strong, secular democracy, a majority Muslim society, and a close ally of free nations. Your country, with 150 years of democratic and social reform, stands as a model to others, and as Europe's bridge to the wider world. Your success is vital to a future of progress and peace in Europe and in the broader Middle East, and the Republic of Turkey can depend on the support and friendship of the United States."